

BEARPARK PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of **Bearpark Parish Council** held on **Wednesday 16 January 2019** at **7.00 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor M Wright in the Chair.

Councillors G Hendry, R Kemp, J Peart, M Wilson and P Wilson.

18/92 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Anderson, M Chard, O Edwards and T Wilson.

18/93 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors R Kemp and M Wilson declared an interest in relation to Item No.7 (Request for Financial Assistance) in their capacity as school governors at Bearpark Primary School.

18/94 REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chair welcomed representatives from Bearpark Action Group to the meeting. The group were attending to provide the parish council with a presentation on their work regarding the proposed Northern Relief Road and Western Relief Road as outlined in the draft County Durham Plan. The group were seeking to maximise public awareness of the potential 'threat' of the Western Relief Road and were looking to encourage objections to Durham County Council by the deadline of 4.30 p.m. on 8 March 2019.

Bearpark Action Group provided the Council with their basic concerns around permanent environmental loss and degradation and the devastating impact such a scheme would potentially cause. The group also highlighted the spread of pollution (noise, light and air) across an extended area to the west of the City Centre. The group felt that the proposed Western Relief Road did not offer a satisfactory or acceptable solution to the problems of traffic congestion and would ultimately make matters worse over time.

The group highlighted what they felt the implications would be for Bearpark and felt that there was no advantage for Bearpark whatsoever.

The core elements of WRAGGS case against the Western Relief Road centred around:

- a lack of consideration to a reasonable alternative;
- An over-concentration of development in Durham City, diverting investment from other parts of the County where it would be positively welcomed; and

- the group also felt that there was no material change in the proposal which was previously condemned by the Planning Inspectorate.

The group would be looking to provide a comprehensive submission to Durham County Council which objected to the Western Relief Road proposals.

The group were also a number of key events which included a demonstration in Durham Market Place.

Finally, the group extended an invitation to all Parish Councillors to their inaugural meeting being held on Monday 21 January 2019 being held in Bearpark Workingmen's Club at 7.30 p.m.

The Chair thanked the group for attending the meeting and for raising their concerns.

18/95 POLICE REPORT

There was no representative from the Police present and no report had been provided. Councillor M Wilson informed the Council that there had been recent staffing changes to the Neighbourhood Policing Team. PACT meetings were again being held at Ushaw Moor Methodist Church Hall, as attendance had dropped off at Bearpark over recent months. If there were any issues of concern relating specifically to Bearpark, the police would react.

18/96 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

County Councillor M Wilson provided an update as follows:

- A cycling and walking strategy had been refreshed, which was 10-year plan looking at active travel;
- Consultation would soon take place on a Housing and Homeless policy;
- County Durham leisure centres, including Freemans Quay were offering a 3 - day pass between 18-21 January to enable people to try out gym and fitness classes; and
- The County Durham Plan pre-submission consultation sessions would be taking place across the county where people could see the plan, ask questions and have their say. The sessions were on a drop-in basis. The session for Bearpark would take place on Monday 18 February 2019 between 4-7 p.m.

18/97 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2018 were **Moved** by Councillor M Wilson, **Seconded** by Councillor R Kemp and agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18/98 REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Bearpark Primary School

The Council considered a request for financial assistance from Bearpark Primary School. The school were seeking funding to visit Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books located near Newcastle. The funding would be used to provide transport to enable the whole school to attend Seven Stories. The school were also seeking funding from other sources to enable each child to be provided with a book.

The Clerk advised the Council that the school had not received any funding direct in the current financial year from the Parish Council. It was good to note that other funding was being sought. The Clerk also advised that the idea behind the whole school visiting Seven Stories was that the session would be focussed solely on the children from Bearpark Primary School.

Councillor G Hendry explained that such visits were extremely valuable to school children and the National Centre for Children's Books was an excellent learning resource.

Moved by Councillor G Hendry, **Seconded** by Councillor J Peart and

Resolved

That a donation of £700 be made to the Primary School to enable the whole school to attend the National Centre for Children's Books.

18/99 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2019/20

The Clerk provided the Council with a breakdown of income and expenditure since April 2018 and reported that the Council held set a budget in previous years to ensure an adequate level of earmarked reserve was held for election costs, insurance excess and assets. This had been set in accordance with audit and accounting guidance. Historically, the Parish Council had kept any precept increases to a minimum and held a generally high, if not too high level of reserve.

However, during 2018/19 the Parish Council had agreed to further support Bearpark Community Centre, potentially from possible closure. The support was also to allow for the process to asset transfer the Community Centre from Durham County Council to a newly formed Community Association and in doing so, securing investment from Durham County Council to bring elements of the building back up to a required standard, following a long period of neglect. The Community Centre was seen as being important asset to the community.

In 2018/19 the parish council, following continual representations from residents, wanted to meet the aspirations of the village to site a lit Christmas tree in the village. This was done at a total cost of £8284.32. This project was not provided for in the budget for 2018/19 and unfortunately, the parish council experienced difficulties with the funding source that had been identified for the project and the full costs for the tree including all of the electrical works were borne by the parish council. It was important to note that the majority of costs were one-off capital expenditure which would not be repeated in future years.

A number of areas in the village had also been tidied up, with money provided for planters, plants and additional grass cutting works in some areas. Supporting such issues and bringing projects, such as the Christmas Tree and lights had utilised a large proportion of the Council's reserves and indeed its operational budget.

Councillors felt that the Christmas tree project had lifted the village and many complimentary comments had been received from people living in the village but also from those passing through. It was something the Council wished to repeat in future years.

All other administrative costs had been kept to a minimum, where possible and the Council had been fairly prudent in other areas of administration.

The Clerk informed the Council that it was not possible to set a standstill budget, nor would it be practicable to levy an increase in-line with inflation and the Council would need to increase its precept to not only cover operational costs, but to reinstate the level of earmarked reserve. The Council had also, by way of its emerging action plan, identified a number of projects they wished to fruition throughout the new financial year. Some of the projects would need funding from additional sources.

Councillor M Wilson felt that an increase of 94p per month was not unreasonable and **Moved** that the Council set an increase of 42.83%. Councillors were unanimous in their support for the motion and it was duly seconded and:

Resolved

That the Council set a precept of £20,500, a council tax at Band D of £37.55 which was a 42.83% increase on the previous year. This would result in a cash increase of £6,146 from 2018/19.

18/100 FINANCE REPORT

The Council considered the monthly financial report which detailed the current bank balances, payments made since the last meeting and payments to be made.

Payments

| Payment | Supplier | Description | Amount |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| BACS | M Turnbull | Clerks Salary (January) | 403.62 |
| BACS | HMRC | PAYE | 100.91 |
| BACS | Bearpark Primary School | Donation | 700.00 |

18/101 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There were no planning applications for consideration. Councillor M Wilson provided an update in relation to the following application:

DM/18/00129/FPA - Development of 170 residential dwellings, including 34 no. affordable dwellings (Amended 9th October 2018) on land to the rear of the Old Chapel, Colliery Road, Bearpark, DH7 7AU

Councillor M Wilson informed the Council that there had been no further progress with the Taylor Wimpey application at Colliery Road and was due to speak to planning officers for an update in the coming week. Councillor Wilson also informed the Council that all businesses located on the industrial site which would be lost should the development be approved. Businesses had now submitted representations to the planning application.

18/102 PARISH COUNCIL ACTION PLAN

The Clerk informed the Council that the action plan had not been updated any further since the previous meeting given that no further additions had been received. The document would now be finalised and would hopefully be used to monitor and chart progress of the direction of travel and better understand what the parish council would do over the next 4-5 years. The action plan was a 'live' document could be added to at any time.

The Chair informed the Council that the next logical step would be to allocate some budget costs against each action.

Resolved

That progress be noted.

18/103 VILLAGE MATTERS

There were no matters reported.

18/104 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next ordinary meeting of the Parish Council would take place on Wednesday 20 February 2019 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 8.20 p.m.